

(iii) the degree to which participants complete the vaccine regimen;

(iv) the total number of doses of vaccine administered; and

(v) recommendations to improve initial and recurrent participation in the pilot program.

(B) FINAL REPORT.—The final report required under subparagraph (A) shall—

(i) consider whether the pilot program required under this subsection should continue after the date described in subsection (c); and

(ii) include—

(I) an analysis of the costs and benefits of continuing the program to provide anthrax vaccines to emergency response providers;

(II) an explanation of the economic, health, and other risks and benefits of administering vaccines through the pilot program rather than post-event treatment; and

(III) in the case of a recommendation under clause (i) to continue the pilot program after the date described in subsection (c), a plan under which the pilot program could be continued.

(b) DEADLINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall begin implementing the pilot program under this section.

(c) SUNSET.—The authority to carry out the pilot program under this section shall expire on the date that is 5 years after the date of enactment of this Act.

The committee-reported title amendment was agreed to, as follows:

Amend the title so as to read: “A bill to direct the Secretary of Homeland Security to make anthrax vaccines available to emergency response providers, and for other purposes.”.

NO VETERANS CRISIS LINE CALL SHOULD GO UNANSWERED ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 5392, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5392) to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to improve the Veterans Crisis Line.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 5392) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM TRAILS STEWARDSHIP ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 845, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 845) to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to publish in the Federal Reg-

ister a strategy to significantly increase the role of volunteers and partners in National Forest System trail maintenance, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 845) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

AMENDING TITLE 49, UNITED STATES CODE, TO INCLUDE CONSIDERATION OF CERTAIN IMPACTS ON COMMERCIAL SPACE LAUNCH AND REENTRY ACTIVITIES IN A NAVIGABLE AIRSPACE ANALYSIS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of H.R. 6007, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6007) to amend title 49, United States Code, to include consideration of certain impacts on commercial space launch and reentry activities in a navigable airspace analysis, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 6007) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

DESIGNATING OCTOBER 30, 2016, AS A NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM WORKERS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Judiciary Committee be discharged from further consideration of and the Senate now proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 560.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 560) designating October 30, 2016, as a national day of remembrance for nuclear weapons program workers.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 560) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of September 15, 2016, under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

NATIONAL ESTUARIES WEEK

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Judiciary Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 608 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 608) designating the week of September 17 through September 24, 2016, as “National Estuaries Week.”

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I know of no further debate on the measure.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the question is on agreeing to the resolution.

The resolution (S. Res. 608) was agreed to.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the preamble be agreed to and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of September 29, 2016, under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2016

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 9:30 a.m., Thursday, November 17; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate resume consideration of the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 543, S. 3110; finally, that notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, the cloture vote with respect to the motion to proceed to S. 3110 occur at noon tomorrow.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of Senator MORAN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Kansas.

ACCOUNTABILITY AT THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I have the honor of serving with the chair on the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and I want to speak tonight about a set of issues, a circumstance that we have found ourselves in.

As you will recall, several years ago there was a national news story and our Nation was appalled to learn that Department of Veterans Affairs employees from across the country were creating secret waiting lists that stood between veterans and the care they deserved. Veterans died waiting for care because of deceptive practices at the VA. In the wake of that wrongdoing, I called for the resignation of the then-Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. At that time, I didn't think things could get worse at the Department, but I was wrong.

In 2014, during the confirmation hearings for the current VA Secretary, Bob McDonald, he seemed to understand the urgency demanded by the American people and by their Congress to fix the problems at the Department of Veterans Affairs. In his testimony, he promised that "the seriousness of this moment demands action . . . those employees that have violated the trust of the Nation and of veterans must be, and will be, held accountable."

Now, more than 2 years later, with authorities granted by Congress and signed into law by the President, the Secretary seems to have forgotten that promise. Time and time again, the Secretary uses a talking point on accountability, stating "the VA has terminated more than 4,095 employees" since he arrived. The real number of terminations is three. Only three people have been discharged from the VA for their misconduct, and another 12 to 15 are "potential removals or demotions."

What the Secretary hasn't said is that thousands of those terminations were actually employees placed on paid leave, thereby racking up \$23 million to pay the salaries of 2,500 VA employees who weren't actually working. The opportunity for the Secretary and for the VA to hold bad actors accountable has been squandered.

The terrible part of this is that Americans have been misled. The accountability the VA created in the wake of the scandal about the fake waiting lists has generated further disappointment and scandal due to the mismanagement and manipulation. Instead of firing people, Americans are paying bad actors to do nothing or, worse yet, they have been transferred to other facilities to continue bad practices. The morale of the vast majority—a huge number—of hard-working people who work for the VA, many who are veterans themselves, has to be

harmed as they care for veterans every day and suffer in this culture of corruption.

In Kansas, my home State, we face one of the worst examples of a VA employee violating the trust of a veteran. Yet the VA seems to have no sense of urgency in holding this person accountable or committing to fixing the process that enabled this individual to do what he did.

In 2015, we learned from newspaper reports—certainly not from the VA—that a physician assistant at the Leavenworth VA hospital, Mr. Mark Wisner, had been sexually abusing veteran patients. Shortly after that news broke, the Leavenworth county prosecutors charged this individual with multiple counts of sexual assault and abuse against numerous veterans. We learned, as the story unfolded, that he had targeted vulnerable veterans suffering from PTSD. He prescribed opioids that inhibited their thinking, and he used his position to deepen the wounds of war rather than healing them.

I will share a quote from two Army veteran brothers who were patients and felt they had no choice but to continue seeking the care or lose the health care benefits they had earned. One of them said: "The fear of losing what I had earned [in benefits] versus the fear of being sexually assaulted again, I don't know which one was more important." Imagine the desperation of a veteran trying to answer that question.

Again, what is so troubling about this situation is that Mr. Wisner should never have been hired by the VA in the first place. As we add injury to insult for these veteran victims, he was not fired after he admitted the abuse. He was allowed to retire, and his voluntary retirement means he receives certain benefits that he might not otherwise received if he had actually been fired.

According to publicly available documents, Mr. Wisner indicated on his application for licensure that he had been convicted of a crime, and further information indicates the crime and convictions were lewd in nature. Yet he was hired.

It is infuriating—it is worse than infuriating—that a person with a criminal record, convicted of a lewd crime, was still hired to be at the frontlines of veteran patient care. When the VA was asked about his criminal record, they indicated that background checks are contingent upon "the position's risk level" and that physician assistant positions were considered "low risk" and didn't require an exhaustive background check.

In my view, a practitioner in patient care should be held to the highest standards of excellence and should receive an exhaustive background check. How can a position in patient care be considered low risk at the VA?

Fortunately, as I said, I serve with the Presiding Officer on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and I had the op-

portunity during one of our committee hearings last September—just a few months ago—to question Secretary McDonald about the background check process and why Mr. Wisner was hired with a known criminal background. The Secretary's response was "there was nothing in his file that suggested that there was a risk." He also suggested that I had different information than he did—than he, the Secretary, did—which is hard to believe because the documentation I was reading from, the circumstances I was describing, came directly from his own Office of Inspector General.

I have also sent the Secretary a letter with more than 20 questions about this situation, hoping I could receive substantive answers to those questions. More than 2 months passed until I received a response last week from the Under Secretary for Health. Actually, I was hoping to learn something from that response about the VA's commitment to fixing their hiring practices, not a canned answer regarding the VA's current process for background checks. Certainly, the 20 questions asked of the Secretary remain unanswered. They remain unanswered regarding why the VA's credentialing process failed to catch Mr. Wisner—a convict. Does the VA not consider lewd crimes or convictions in an applicant's file as a risk to veterans? The responses have been unacceptable. The lack of response has been unacceptable.

Also unacceptable are the circumstances surrounding Mr. Wisner's separation from the VA. Instead of an immediate termination, unbelievably, he was permitted to retire with full benefits. When the VA police received a complaint about Mr. Wisner in May of 2014, they alerted the VA inspector general. Wisner was removed from patient care and placed on paid administrative leave while the IG conducted its investigation. Some days later, in an interview with the VA inspector general's special agent, Wisner admitted he "crossed the professional line" and that he engaged in "unnecessary and inappropriate behavior of a sexual nature." Mr. Wisner made no attempt to hide his actions, stating that he "knew what he was doing to these patients was wrong and that he had no self-control."

Despite confessing to these horrible and illegal actions, Mr. Wisner continued to be an employee of the VA for 37 more days, giving him enough time to beat the VA to the punch and seeking and receiving retirement on June 28, 2014. One would think the moment a VA employee admits to violating or abusing a patient, a client, or a co-worker would be the moment their paycheck would end and they would no longer be employed; that there would be zero tolerance for such egregious conduct.

Grounds for immediate termination clearly existed from Wisner's own confessions. Yet he was able to gather all his personal documents and submit his